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8 keys to a more powerful prayer life in 2018

I love this verse from Luke 5:16 because it shows that just like you and me, Jesus needed a break from the demands of his busy life to recharge his batteries and spend time with his Heavenly Father. The life of Christ is intended to give us examples we can follow and learn from. So, even though He was God incarnate, Jesus didn't draw on his superpowers as the Son of God when it came to facing life's challenges. Instead, when he was exhausted or burdened or in need of spiritual refreshment, he would "slip away" to pray — plugging into the power, perception, and purpose that can only be found in God's presence.

But He (Jesus) would often slip away to the wilderness to pray.

—*Luke 5:16 (AMP)*

Prayer is one of the most powerful weapons God has given us, and looking ahead at 2018, I believe it has never been more important for God's people to be on our knees. But knowing how to pray is not always easy. Jesus' disciples felt the same confusion. They were familiar with the oft-repeated prayers of the Torah. But Jesus prayed with a kind of authority and power they had never seen before — as though God was listening! So when they came to Jesus, as told in Matthew 6, they didn't say, "Teach us another prayer." They said, "Lord, teach us to pray."

The Lord's Prayer is Christ's response. It is a beautiful prayer and one that every Christian should hide in their heart — I just challenged my 8-year-old granddaughter to memorize it. But elegant as the words are, I do not believe Jesus intended it to become another ritualistic prayer. Rather, it was to be an example of *how* to pray.

Here are eight keys that have helped me develop a more powerful prayer life. I hope they will encourage you to make 2018 a year of prayer.

1. Know to whom you are speaking.

Prayer is a conversation with God, and every conversation begins by addressing the person to whom you are speaking by name. Jesus begins with “Our Father who art in heaven.” He focuses on a distinct person — the Heavenly Father with whom he has a personal relationship. We share the same right to call God “Father,” and there are times when we need to talk with our Abba Father, Daddy God. But God is three distinct persons in One: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

I find it helpful in my prayer times to focus on which of the Holy Trinity I need to talk to. Often I talk to Jesus, the friend who is closer than a brother and the Savior of my soul. Other times I cry out to the Holy Spirit, who fills and empowers me to do the tasks Father God has called me to do. Having a distinct sense of who I am speaking to helps me formulate what I want to say and how I want to say it.

2. Thank him.

A heartfelt thank you is always a great conversation starter. Like any parent, God loves to see that we have grateful hearts. But more importantly, as we take the time to praise God for all He has done in the past — the answered prayers, the impossible situations overcome, the healings and grace — our faith to believe for even greater answers to prayer grows stronger and more confident. Praise opens the gates of heaven and should always be part of our alone time with God.

3. Ask for God’s will.

The Lord’s Prayer is not the only place where Jesus role-modeled a heart of obedience and submission to the will of God over His own desires and needs. In the Garden of Gethsemane, just hours before his crucifixion, he would once again pray, “Not my will, but Thine be done.” In a world where right and wrong are frequently confused and the future is so uncertain, it can be hard to know how to pray or what to ask for when difficult circumstances arise. But the one thing we can know with absolute certainty is that God’s plan for those who love him is good, and the safest place we can be is in the center of his divine will.

4. Say what you need.

In Jesus' time bread was a staple — one of the most basic needs of life — and he did not hesitate to ask God to provide it. But we often hesitate to bother God with the little things we need, thinking he shouldn't be bothered. And when the big problems come, we try everything we can to solve the problem *before* we think to pray. The Bible says, "Ye have not because you ask not!" So never hesitate to ask God for what you need in 2018. Your Father in heaven delights to give you good gifts.

5. Ask for forgiveness.

James 5:16 reminds us that if we want our prayers to be heard, our hearts need to be right with God and with one another. If you feel your prayers are bouncing off the ceiling, take some time to check your heart.

6. Pray with a friend.

There is power in agreement when we pray in Jesus' name. When I have an urgent need to take before the throne of God, I will often call a friend to pray with me. If you don't already have one, make finding a trusted prayer partner one of your goals in 2018.

7. Pray the Word.

My mother was a spiritual prayer warrior, and much that I know about prayer I learned from her. I loved to listen to her pray because for every need or situation, she would claim a scripture of promise. "The Word of God has power and is our great spiritual weapon," Mama would say. "Pray the Word, Marilee. Pray the Word."

Jesus did the same when he was tempted by Satan in the wilderness (see Luke 4:1-12). He was the Son of God, but he did not use his divine authority. Instead he used the authority of the Scriptures.

8. Memorize Scripture.

The most important key to a vibrant prayer life is to understand our spiritual authority in Christ as explained in the Scriptures. The only way to do that is to become intimately familiar with the Bible. Even a few minutes a day in the Word of God will add strength and authority to your prayers in 2018.





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